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ABSTRACT

Intended for parents, as well as school administrators, policymakers, and teachers, this digest discusses resources available for developing children's early literacy. The digest first discusses research indicating the role of parents in early reading experience, then discusses, in general terms, sources for literacy materials for parents, classrooms, and the community. The digest concludes with a bibliography and a list of organizations that distribute literacy materials. (HTH)

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ERIC Digest

Resources for Involving Parents in Literacy Development

by

Myna M. Haussler, University of Arizona
Yetta M. Goodman, University of Arizona

The idea that parents play a vital role in their children's literacy development is not new. Edmond Huey, in 1908, wrote as follows:

> The child makes endless questionings about the names of things, as every mother knows. He is concerned also about the printed notices, signs, titles, visiting cards, etc., that come in his way, and should be told what these "say" when he makes inquiry. It is surprising how large a stock of printed or written words a child will gradually come to recognize in this way.

In 1934, Nila B. Smith acknowledged that early reading is taught at home rather than at school. Current literacy research, reported by Teale (1981), Doake (1981), Haussler (1982), and Taylor (1983), indicates not only that the amount of audult-child reading and writing interaction before school is important, but also that the quality of the interactions makes a difference. Parents' attitudes toward literacy, the time they spend

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interacting with children and print, and the accessibility of literacy materials in the home (such as newspapers, books, chalkboards, paper and writing implements) influence children's reading and writing development.

It is thus becoming increasingly important for educators to communicate to parents and child care professionals their crucial role in children's reading and writing development. While face-to-face contact with parents is preferable for establishing cooperation between home and school, it is not always possible. For a variety of legitimate reasons, parents cannot always attend school meetings or conferences. In addition, much of the home literacy environment is well established before parents bring a child to school for the first time. For these reasons, brochures, letters to parents, and educational pamphlets about the role of the home in literacy development provide a valuable line of communication between the home and the school.

Materials for Parents

Many international, national, state, and local organizations (as well as some private publishing companies) have recognized the importance of the parent in literacy development, publishing inexpensive brochures and pamphlets that are useful for parent education. Most of the pamphlets are written with parents as their audience and are reasonably priced. Purchasing these pamphlets and finding creative ways for disseminating them at school and in the community is an ideal project for the parent-teacher organizations and other parent or teacher groups.

In addition, teachers and administrators should reach into the larger community to alert other professionals--including noneducators--of the important role they can play in involving parents in literacy education. Schools should look for support for the dissemination of a variety of educational information by pediatricians, dentists, hospitals, childbirth and newborn class teachers, social workers, preschool teachers, and other child

care professionals. Such literature should not only emlinate from schools but also be distributed at doctor's offices and at other community agencies to provide parents information about their important role in their children's success in school. In addition, State Departments of Education, book sellers, or other private industries might be contacted to help with dissemination and financial support.

The brochures or pamphlets may help parents think about their own role in their children's literacy development for the first time. Young parents at a newborn class may discover the importance of reading to their child from an early age or of allowing children to write on chalkboards.

At school, classroom teachers, reading specialists, and school administrators will find these brochures valuable in supplementing classroom reading calendars, newsletters, and personal letters which go home to parents throughout the year. Some are appropriate for explaining the importance of reading at the beginning of the school year, others list book selections which are ideal for sending home at winter holiday times; while still others will encourage summer reading at home.

Teachers and schools can thus build parent and educator cooperation in the development of literacy by becoming disseminators of useful, relevant information. Some resources may be obtained by writing to the organizations listed below. (Please include a #10 self-addressed, stamped envelope.) In addition, local resources should be checked. Many state and local reading, language, and early childhood organizations have a variety of fine brochures. Finally, a list of ERIC documents is presented below as a further source of helpful ideas and materials. With such resources, it is possible for school personnel to show parents and others in the community that schools provide leadership and take seriously the cooperative relationships necessary for literary development.

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Teale, W. "Toward a Theory of How Children Learn to Read and Write Naturally." Language Arts, v59 n6 (1982), pp. 555-570.

Organizations

American Library Association
50 East Huron Street
Chicago, Illinois 60611

Association for Childhood
Education International
ACEI Publications
3615 Wisconsin Avenue, NW
Washington, D.C. 20016

The Children's Book Council,
Inc.
67 Irving
New York, New York 10001

Education Department
Dell Publishing Company,
Inc.
245 East 47th Street
New York, New York 10017

International Reading Association
800 Barksdale Road
P.O. Box 8139
Newark, Delaware 19711

National Council of Teachers
of English
1111 Kenyon Road
Urbana, Illinois 61801

Scholastic, Inc.
50 West 44th Street
New York, New York 10036

Micromonographs Available from the International Reading Association

What Books and Records Should I Get for My Preschooler?
Norma Rogers

How Can I Help My Child Build Positive Attitudes toward Reading?
Susan M. Glazer

What is Reading Readiness?
Norma Rogers

How Can I Help My Child Get Ready to Read?
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How Can I Help My Child Learn to Read English as a Second Language?
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Monson, Dianne L., and DayAnn K. McClenathan, eds. Developing Active Readers: Ideas for Parents, Teachers, and Librarians. Newark, Del.: International Reading Association, 1979. (ED 178 872)

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Pennsylvania State Department of Education. A Parent's Guide to

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Ransbury, Molly Kayes. How Can I Encourage My Primary-Grade Child to Read? Bloomington, Ind.: ERIC Clearinghouse on Reading; Newark, Del.: International Reading Association, 1972. (ED 112 358)

Simons, Jenny. Learning to Read: Parents Can Help. Watson, Australia: Australia Early Childhood Association, Inc., 1981. (ED 212 350)

Tregaskis, George K., and others. Learning Experiences at Home: Reinforcement for the Early School Program. Albany: New York State Department of Education, Bureau of Continuing Education Curriculum Development, 1974. (ED 105 995)

Trelease, Jim. The Read Aloud Handbook. New York: Penguin Books, 1982. (ED 226 330)

Truby, Roy. Parents in Reading: Parents' Booklet (Folleto para los padres). Portland, Ore.: Northwest Regional Educational Laboratory, 1979. (ED 172 185)

Vail, Neil J. and Nancy R. How to Help Your Child Grow in Reading. Racine, Wisc.: Racine Unified School District 1, 1975. (ED 157 012)

Winograd, Peter. Reading for Parents. Urbana, Ill.: University of Illinois, 1979. (ED 170 715)

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Resources for Involving Parents in Literacy Development

Parent Role

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Organizations

American Library Association
50 East Huron Street
Chicago, Illinois 60611

Association for Childhood Education International
ACEI Publications
3615 Wisconsin Avenue, NW
Washington, D.C. 20016

The Children's Book Council, Inc.
67 Irving
New York, New York 10001

Education Department
Dell Publishing Company, Inc.
245 East 47th Street
New York, New York 10017

International Reading Association
800 Barksdale Road
P.O. Box 8139
Newark, Delaware 19711

National Council of Teachers of English
1111 Kenyon Road
Urbana, Illinois 61801

Scholastic, Inc.
50 West 44th Street
New York, New York 10036

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